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Amaze Entertainment

Company: Amaze Entertainment

Company Description: Amaze Entertainment is one of the largest independent game development companies in the world that creates high quality game titles for PCs and all video game devices. Amaze Entertainment is comprised of four unique studios, Adreninum Games, Griptonite Games, KnowWonder and The Fizz Factor, each of which is dedicated to bringing the finest game play to consumers.

Nomination Category: Team Awards Categories
Nomination Sub Category: Best Creative Team

Nomination Title: Amaze Entertainment - KnowWonder Studio

1. Tell the story of what this team has achieved in 2002 (up to 500 words). Focus on specific accomplishments, and relate these accomplishments to past performance or industry norms. Be sure to mention obstacles overcome, innovations or discoveries made, and outcomes:

Amaze Entertainment, one of the largest global independent game development companies, has made a successful business out of PC gaming for kids and families. One of its studios, KnowWonder, is dedicated solely to the creation of best-selling PC games for young audiences.

In 2002, KnowWonder developed a beautifully-designed 3D action adventure PC game based on the blockbuster feature film Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets™. While making such a game is a dream come true, the team had obstacles to overcome that would compliment, if not surpass, the movie's stunning visuals.

KnowWonder knew it needed to power the real-time 3D images in the game, and selected the Unreal engine, which was previously used for first-person action titles for hard core gamers. KnowWonder was the first to successfully leverage the Unreal engine in a children's PC game. This achievement was critical,

because most kids play games on hand-me-down PCs. KnowWonder was able to pack gorgeous special effects and lightning fast gameplay into Harry Potter and the Chamber Secrets, and build the game to run even on older model PCs. For the game's publisher, Electronic Arts, this feat was essential, since it shipped the title in 22 languages, including to countries with PCs less sophisticated than those in the United States. KnowWonder is the only team in the world to master 3D action adventure games for kids.

KnowWonder's creativity stems from brainstorming and collaboration. The team is extremely close. Every person has a specific role, but the group encourages each other, has a united desire to wring as much as they can out of technology, and a shared passion for dreaming up new possibilities for Harry Potter".

Most of the developers are in their 20s and 30s. They had to put their heads into the minds of youngsters and imagine what might excite them about a digital version of the Harry Potter world. Knowing that kids of different ages love the franchise and would be playing the game, KnowWonder cleverly devised different flow options to accommodate a range of skill levels. The depth of the game was also breakthrough, giving kids a chance to explore their favorite worlds or relive scenes.

KnowWonder was also committed to shipping the game day and date with the movie, often a stifling task for a group of artists. Additionally, the movie was in development at the same time, so the team had little access to the film's details. They had to spark their creative senses to echo the movie. In the end, when the team saw the film, they realized just how accurately they mirrored certain key scenes.

When Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets launched in 2002, the game was an instant blockbuster, generating gigantic buzz among fans. The game even outpaced the hugely popular The Sims: Unleashed™ PC title during the first week, according the NPD Group. KnowWonder not only rejuvenated the PC gaming industry, it proved that kids, too, take their gaming very seriously.

- List hyperlinks to any online news stories, press releases, or other documents that support the claims made in the section above.

To include a URL you must begin and end the URL with a square-bracket and include http://
Example: **[http://www.yourdomain.com] (http://www.yourdomain.com])**

- Provide a brief (up to 100 words) biography about the leader(s) of this nominated team:

Dan Elenbaas began his entrepreneurial career in 1986 as president of the successful hDC Computer Corporation – one of the first Microsoft Windows ISVs. At his follow-up company, Amaze, Inc., Dan built upon his technology experience and moved into interactive entertainment with the creation of several best-selling software titles, including The Far Side Daily Planner and the Opus & Bill Screensaver. In 1996, Dan formed Amaze Entertainment, which has grown into one of the largest and most successful independent developers of interactive entertainment in the world with clients ranging from Microsoft and Acclaim to Mattel and Electronic Arts.

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